



INITIATIVES FROM THE SUPPLY SIDE ○ ○ ○ ○

AHRC is committed to brokering and facilitating new exchanges between the supply and demand sides of Aboriginal employment. In this issue of *The National Report on Aboriginal Inclusion*, we look at some impressive recent initiatives emerging from the supply side:

- The Enoch Cree Nation’s Bearings project shows how Aboriginal employees can best be trained and assisted in their work in the River Cree Resort and Casino.
- The Métis Nation of Alberta has launched a new type of mobile trades training, using a refitted Winnebago van.
- A profile of Joseph McQuabbie, of Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training Center in Toronto.
- The Prince George Nechako Aboriginal Employment Training Association’s trades training program.
- A Student’s Success Perceptive: Trades training with the Métis Nation of Ontario.

OUR NATIONAL OFFICE HAS A NEW HOME ○ ○ ○ ○

As of October this year, the council has moved into a new office building.

Aboriginal Human Resource Council
708 - 2nd Avenue North Saskatoon, SK S7K 2E1

Please adjust your council mailing and courier contact information. Phone, fax, email and website contact information will remain the same.

AHRC would like to acknowledge a landmark donation of \$25,000 from RBC Foundation toward the purchase of our new office building.

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The council’s new national office in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan



Reason to Believe...

The Ojibway community of Pikangikum sits about 300 km northeast of Winnipeg, in Ontario. It's a vivid reminder that parts of Canada still belong to the Third World.

In Pikangikum, if a building has toilets and running water, you can be fairly sure it houses government offices. Most of the town's 2,000 residents rely on wells and outhouses, even though winter conditions often plunge Pikangikum to -30 degrees.

In Pikangikum, a school originally built for 350 now houses more than 700 students. A visiting journalist said the only playground equipment he could find at the school were a skipping rope and a battered hockey net.

There are roads leaving Pikangikum. They lead into bush. The only way in or out of Pikangikum is by air.

The people of Pikangikum suffer sharply higher rates of diabetes and heart disease than the national average. Yet in Pikangikum, healthy food itself is a challenge: a two-litre carton of milk costs about \$6.00 and a five-pound bag of potatoes may cost over \$8.00.

The great agony of Pikangikum is the despair of its young. In the year 2000 alone, eight females killed themselves; five of them were 13 years old. Throughout the 1990s, Pikangikum averaged 213 suicides per 100,000 people, making it a world capital of suicide.

Pikangikum has been cited in news media, sometimes called the Davis Inlet of Ontario. Money has been funneled to it by the federal government and the Ontario government. But in Pikangikum, the Third World conditions continue to prevail.

I present Pikangikum as a terrible question put to all of us. What is the road out of Pikangikum?

How can a community such as Pikangikum overcome its Third World status? What exact steps can bring Pikangikum wholly into the economic mainstream of 21st century Canada?

And we can't forget: Pikangikum is one piece of a vast mosaic. To transform Pikangikum from Third World to First World conditions would, almost certainly, require a comparable transformation among Aboriginal communities across Canada.

Can it be done? I wish I could say, Yes! and supply you with all the answers, neatly spelled out. No one can. What I can spell out, however, are powerful reasons why I believe we will find the answers:

Archeologists have unearthed Aboriginal settlements going back over 30,000 years – reminding us that for most of their history in what is now Canada, Aboriginal groups did not live in self-defeating communities like Pikangikum:

they belonged to hard-working communities that fostered such universal values as hard work, kinship, integrity and responsibility.

Today, that same spirit of self-reliance and a willingness to work hard and master new competencies is driving much of the recent growth in education, employment and entrepreneurship. More Aboriginal youth are graduating from high school than ever before; more are entering and graduating from college; more are emerging from trade schools and apprenticeships with trade certificates than ever before.

The new corporate lifeblood – CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility is an idea that has been expanding in stature and reach over the last 20 years. In Canada, few people understand the depths of CSR as well as my good friend, Eric Newell. Retired now, Eric served as the CEO of Syncrude from 1989 to 2003 and was the original co-chair of the council's Board of Champions.

In 2001, Eric said: "We regard every single one of our Aboriginal initiatives as a sound investment in our own prosperity. By putting something in, like human or financial resources for Aboriginal business development, employment or education, we get something back out."

That, folks, is real CSR: corporate self-interest translated into social understanding and commitment. Wherever corporations commit to CSR, Aboriginal employment is certain to grow.

The Internet has embossed our larger culture with its grand rule: everywhere, Aboriginal people and employers are learning to connect. And this connectivity is spawning relationships – creating real connections where it counts, in the hearts and minds of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

I see the new connectivity in many contexts. But I'll focus on one: our Workforce Connex events, "mixers" where employers and Aboriginal employment practitioners meet, and, so to speak, dance with one another.

You the reader also give us reason to believe... by looking into these pages you are asking to be made more aware, more apprised, more resourcefully equipped and ultimately, more inclusive.

I believe that the greatest power lies not with the CEO but with the supervisors and mid-level managers; the people responsible for implementing workplace strategies, allocating budgets, streamlining investments and measuring outcomes. The very fact you are asking the council for help, gives me reason to believe that you are already forming part of the answer.

WORLD-CLASS FACILITY BOASTS 50 PER CENT ABORIGINAL WORKFORCE: THE BEARINGS PROJECT FOR SUCCESS ○ ○ ○ ○

Bearings: *The awareness of one's position or situation relative to one's surroundings.*

In a world where the number of people hired is often used to measure success, one employment program, the Bearings project, has also set its standards by how many people become believers – believers in themselves, their potential and their future.

Home to the Bearings project and located on the western outskirts of Edmonton, Alberta at the Enoch Cree Nation, the River Cree resort covers 49 acres and includes a four-star, full-service 256-room Marriott hotel, a 62,000 sq. ft. casino with 650 machines and 40 table games, conferencing facilities, restaurants, live A-list entertainers and an indoor twin arena sports complex.

Owned by the Enoch Cree Nation and Paragon Gaming of Las Vegas, the resort has already succeeded in becoming the largest employer of First Nations workers in the Edmonton area with an employment ratio of 24 per cent spread across the casino, hotel and ice arena.

While that statistic is impressive, even more so are the goals of this joint venture – to support and encourage a new generation of skilled workers who have confidence, motivation and belief in their abilities to excel.

“The project was created by Scott Menke, president, and Brent Fleming, vice-president of human resources and organizational development for Paragon Gaming,” says Janet Denys, manager of the Bearings project.

“Scott and Brent saw the unique challenges and opportunities associated with First Nations employment and as a result the Bearings project was created.”

“Today, it is the model for all the Paragon Gaming First Nations partnerships,” says Denys.



The Bearings project model is based on a demonstrated commitment; every First Nations member who is interested in working at the resort has priority ‘first to hire’ access and an ongoing means to reach their employment and career goals.

Not only does the project act as a focal point for sustainable employment, it also acts as conduit for promotion and a higher level of job satisfaction.

As part of the HR team, manager of the Bearings project, Denys is responsible for employment recruitment outreach and helping new and seasoned staff move up the promotion ladder.

“A big part of my job is helping employees to perform...I often walk through to see how the First Nations employees are doing,” she says. “I want to make sure they are feeling comfortable because sometimes it is hard for them to express how they are feeling.”

As Denys notes, “we have challenges just like any other organization...a single mom who needs daycare or someone with transportation issues...what we’ve learned is to be flexible.” “This is a fair, very respectful employer and there is so much opportunity here,” she adds. “It’s very positive here...it’s a great place to work.”

With plenty of on-the-job training, most of the positions are entry level such as desk clerk, waiters and dealers – which can all lead to supervisory roles and bright careers ahead in the tourism and hospitality sector.

With the resort’s first anniversary of success just behind (October 26, 2007), one of its most important accomplishments lies in the non-statistical outcomes of its Bearings project. By building bridges of understanding and encouraging an exchange of information between cultures, the Bearings project helps all employees gain awareness of their surroundings, allowing many to visualize a balanced future of prosperity and respect.

For more information on River Cree visit www.rivercreeresort.com.

Janet Denys, Manager of the Enoch Cree Nation’s Bearings Project.



Employees of the River Cree resort and casino, also members of the Enoch Cree Nation, and beneficiaries of the Bearings Project.

FINDING 100 PER CENT SUCCESS WITH TRADES TRAINING ○ ○ ○ ○

In six short weeks a dozen lives were dramatically changed, thanks to a first time construction training course offered by the Prince George Nechako Aboriginal Employment Training Association (PGNAETA) in British Columbia.

“This is a program that is client driven, and needs driven with a priority placed on the trades,” says Bellerose. “It’s also a program that is industry-directed to ensure that we prepare for what is needed. It’s a win-win.”

“
This is a program that is client driven and needs driven, with a priority placed on the trades. It’s a win-win.
”

With a 100 per cent success rate, the program included several certificates to ensure that students were job ready and, as a result, they all have found employment.

“The students really pulled together as a group to work, in conjunction with a job coach and program coordinator to prepare resumes and learn the ‘soft’ skills needed in the workplace,” says Paula Bellerose, trades manager for the PGNAETA. “When the certification for the forklift operator was added at the last minute, not everyone was sure they would pass it, but, through a team effort, they did.” Now, on the heels of this successful outcome, there are 40 more students on the waiting list for construction training.

In addition to this program, the PGNAETA also provides an array of human resource development services to 17 First Nations, urban and rural Aboriginal communities.

Originally founded in 1993, the PGNAETA has been working towards the long-term goal of Aboriginal self-sufficiency.

In 2004, as part of the strategic planning process, leadership within the PGNAETA adopted the theme Shaping Our World – Impacting Local Economies as a dynamic approach to improving the participation of Aboriginal workers in local economies and the current labour market. Today, that goal is one step closer as the graduates of the first construction training program move into profitable careers within the trades sector.



RUNNER OF THE WOODS: ○ ○ ○ ○ A MOBILE TRAINING UNIT BRINGING OPPORTUNITY TO REMOTE AREAS

In February 2006, the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) began researching a unique method to promote its labour market development program and deliver employment services to remote areas of the province. The result... a Métis Employment Services on wheels, which was purchased in July 2006 in the form of a 31' Winnebago refitted complete with wheelchair access.

While there are already 16 Métis employment services offices spread throughout the province, those in remote areas face barriers such as transportation, cost, or lack of information to access an office within their region.

The Coureur De Bois houses three client workstations complete with computers, Internet service supported through satellite or air card and a printer network. There are also display areas for labour market information. A counseling office with database access is also available and staffed by an employment counsellor.

“We are trying to draw out and encourage the discouraged or more reclusive clients to come forward and examine what Métis Employment Services has for them and hopefully take some action towards training and interventions that lead to employment,” explains Lorne Gladue, director of the MNA’s labour market development program.

So far, more than 600 clients, have toured the mobile unit, used the client computers and made inquiries about services, with at least 63 identifying themselves as youth.

The unit, proudly named by employment officer Gladue, goes by Coureur De Bois, meaning ‘runner of the woods.’ With a name befitting its role, the Winnebago has been serving the remote Métis nations of northern Alberta since August 2006.

Sharon Sawchuk, a senior program consultant with the labour market development program says that “31 clients have used the counseling services on site and have applied for employment interventions with the MNA.”

Since being officially unveiled at the Métis Nation Annual General Assembly in Lac La Biche, Alberta, the unit has visited 60 communities, and traveled more than 17,907 kilometers throughout the province.

To date, the highly visible RV has been very successful in attracting Métis individuals who may not have been fully aware of the programs and services available to their community.

“It extends our service delivery network to remote locations across the province where some of our clients typically do not have access to our services,” says Audrey Poitras, president of the MNA.

Neil Irvine, Assistant Deputy Minister of Delivery Services for Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry agrees, saying “I would like to congratulate the MNA – things like this set the standard that all the other people in this area [employment services] will have to try and meet.”

“Runner of the Woods,” or Coureur de Bois, can deliver sophisticated client workstations in trades training to virtually any remote community in Alberta.

EMBRACING THE SPIRIT OF CHANGE: ○ ○ ○ ○ MIZIWE BIIK ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT CENTRE

As a former Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) officer of 11 years, Joseph McQuabbie has gained a heightened sense of 'living by example' and now spends his workdays helping others gain the life skills necessary to do the same.

"I've taken my policing career and applied it to being a life coach," says McQuabbie, an employment counsellor for Toronto's Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training Centre.

"The OPP is a fine organization and, through it, they brought out my true character", said Joseph. "I learned the four R's - respect, restraint and responsibility, which lead to resilience."

Working as a police officer in Ontario's Lake of the Woods area, McQuabbie decided to embark on a journey of self-discovery to understand his own hidden potential.

While he agrees that his old job was rewarding and a catalyst for change, McQuabbie loves his new career because it allows him to show Aboriginal clients that, despite multiple barriers and challenges, they can be in charge of their futures.

He says, "it's about giving them power...if they (Aboriginal people) don't know how to deal with the behaviours of the past, then they don't know how to go forward. An elder told me, you are only as tall as your shadow...it depends on how much light is shining on you."

Bringing light and hope into the lives of the homeless, the hidden homeless or the borderline homeless, or those who have been institutionalized in prisons, is one of McQuabbie's main goals.

As a counsellor, facilitator and trainer, he offers life skills workshops that help address the many challenges facing his clients and, as part of that delivery, he also refers them to services and other resources that can also assist.

In the last 2.5 years, about 220 people have gone through the life skills (personal development) program successfully but none more so than Rob Morrison.

After 21 years in prison, Morrison entered the program and turned his life around by becoming an estimator for PCL Construction.

"Initially, PCL was very resistant to hiring someone out of prison but eventually they agreed to give him a try as a general labourer," says McQuabbie.

The rest is history... when McQuabbie followed-up to see how his client was doing; the construction company informed him that they "couldn't have asked for a better worker."

It's no wonder that Toronto Social Services calls this program the most successful life skills program in Ontario. Based on the provinces certification program, the Miziwe Biik model is designed to build on self. "We want to show them, rather than help them," says McQuabbie. "No one has ever told them that they have control over their lives and that they are in charge. The biggest challenge is getting them to move away from blame," he says.

In the end, it is all about embracing the spirit of change.

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You are only as tall as your shadow...it depends on how much light is shining on you.

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"Water Which Flows All Around Us"

In 1991, Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training Centre was created to meet the unique training and employment needs of Aboriginal Peoples in the urban Toronto area.

Formerly known as the Greater Toronto Aboriginal Management Board (GTAMB), the name Miziwe Biik was given to the organization by Jim Windigo, a respected Ojibway elder. This new name is associated with the female water spirit and means 'water which flows all around us'.

With its ability to reach out and make positive changes in the lives of urban native people across the Greater Toronto area, Miziwe Biik has been compared to a body of water where a ripple effect has been created.

Its mandate is to counsel its clients on career paths and opportunities, to work with employers to secure employment opportunities, to deliver

federal and provincial training programs and to work with both groups and individuals to achieve these endeavours.

With three employment counsellors, a job development officer and many on-site resources, the facility is able to offer a number of services including:

- employment counseling
- assistance with cover letter and resume writing
- a computer resource centre with Internet access
- mailing, photo copy and fax service
- referrals to employment supports network, health and other Aboriginal agencies
- information about living in Toronto, referrals to social services
- information about training, education and wage subsidies

GAINING CLARITY AND COMMITMENT IN TRADES TRAINING: ○ ○ ○ ○ MÉTIS NATION OF ONTARIO



Derek Hamilton, who with the assistance of the Métis Nation of Ontario's apprenticeship and employment program, obtained his oil burner/gas technician certification from Sir Standford Fleming College in Peterborough.

After being without work three times in the space of one year, Derek Hamilton decided he needed a new approach to his future. By reversing the typical job search process, Hamilton, with the help of the Métis Nation of Ontario, was able to find a company that was willing to hire him and then give him an opportunity to get the necessary training to qualify for the job.

With a commitment in hand, Hamilton secured funding through the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) to gain his oil burner/gas technician certification at Sir Sandford Fleming College in Peterborough, Ontario.

To overcome the housing barrier that would support Hamilton while he attended his eight week course and college (a long way from his home in Shallow Lake (near Owen Sound), Derek went to his family for support. With the help of his parents, the family camper was deposited in a nearby campground, which provided Hamilton with had a modern, somewhat mobile, student dorm throughout his time at college.

Hamilton went to work in his new position six days after graduation – another success story thanks to personal determination, parental support and subsidized trades training.

“We have one heck of a talented pool of Aboriginal youth,” says Cyndi King, provincial apprenticeship/employer coordinator for the MNO. “While many are good at trades, many don’t have anything (education) formal,” she says.

In a role that has only been in existence for six months, one of King’s main tasks as the provincial apprenticeship coordinator is to help Aboriginal workers gain the much-needed trades certification to take advantage of labour openings.

“Half of our population is youth under the age of 29,” she explains. “But many workers lack confidence and focused skills...and many need job coaches.” And that’s where the MNO comes in.

With a number of programs and services available, the MNO is intent on addressing issues on both sides of supply and demand.

While workers need to be more job-ready, employers are also hungry for information and guidance in how to recruit and retain an Aboriginal workforce. And, as employers become more aware of the potential that lies in the current Aboriginal baby boom, King says, many Aboriginal people still find apprenticeship programs far too confusing.

“Job seekers and parents also find it confusing...that’s why we want to centralize apprenticeship with a 1.800 number,” says King. It’s one of many initiatives that the MNO has planned to assist workers and employers connect positively with each other.

King credits the MNO’s new partnership with the Aboriginal Human Resources Council (AHRC) as being one of the main drivers of trades training. “The AHRC’s *Workforce Connex* forum series has driven this...we have the people but it’s the employer piece that was missing,” she says.

Now, with new partnerships forming, King is confident that the last barrier has been lifted. “The council is engaging employers...it’s saying, ‘here is our pool of talent...can you see us? I once called Kelly (Lindsay), the president, and he had Tim Horton’s in his office...I just can’t do that,” she adds, with a laugh.



Derek Hamilton's self-described “dorm room,” while attending college: his parents’ family camper.

Register early - last year's conference sold out! Only 250 seats available.

Mark Your Calendar – Discover Montréal this spring...

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL HUMAN RESOURCE CONFERENCE 2008

Advancing Aboriginal Inclusion

April 22-24, 2008 –Delta Centre Ville – Montréal, QC

Keynote Speakers – Panels – Breakout Sessions - Networking

Who should attend

Employers / Aboriginal Employment Practitioners / Human Resource & Diversity Managers / Recruitment Managers / Educators / Career Development Specialists

Registration Fees (includes meals)

Early Bird - \$495.00* / \$595.00 (plus GST)

After February 21, 2008 - \$595.00* / \$795.00 (plus GST)

* special rate for non-profit Aboriginal organizations

Great Hotel Rates

Delta Centre Ville - \$149.00 - single or double (plus taxes). This rate is also available two days before and after the conference. Room rate deadline: March 21, 2008 (based on availability).

For more information visit www.aboriginalhr.ca

"THERE'S NO LIMIT TO WHAT ABORIGINAL EMPLOYEES CAN ACHIEVE AT CAMECO" ONE FAMILY'S STORY ○ ○ ○ ○

At the Economic Development conference held in Saskatoon in September, the Council's Kelly Lendsay was co-presenting with Cameco's Manager of Northern Affairs, Julia Ewing. A man came up afterwards and said, "I'm living proof of everything you've been saying about Cameco. I have four sons. Cameco is putting them all through college."

His name is John Desjarlais. A quarter century ago, he made a career choice as a process operator for Cameco at its Key Lake mining operation. Lately, his choice has become a family affair.

"Cameco is the leader in Saskatchewan for integrating and supporting Aboriginal workers," says Desjarlais. "All you have to do is look around the Key Lake site and you will see Aboriginals in all positions, from front-line management to supervisors and engineers. There's no limit to what Aboriginal employees can achieve at Cameco."

To achieve its current employment ratio of 48 per cent Aboriginal workers at the Key Lake site, the company's hiring practices include giving preference to residents of northern Saskatchewan, as well as supporting local businesses and employee families.

Desjarlais's children have also been provided with summer work opportunities. "The field experience they can gain is invaluable," he says.

For one of John's sons, his journey with Cameco has taken him from a summer job to senior management, all in four years. His son is now in his second year in the University of Saskatchewan engineering program and, not only is Cameco paying his tuition, but it's also continuing to pay his wages while he completes his education. "Cameco has taken the pressure off my children and my family for getting an education," says Desjarlais.

Cameco also provided us with a computer and regularly follows-up on the progress of the family. As a result, his son now acts as a mentor for new Aboriginal students, helping to prepare them for the road ahead.

"So many Aboriginal students are not successful because they leave home to attend a big school and feel a sense of isolation," Desjarlais says. "They often return home before completing their schooling due to a lack of support. Cameco helps eliminate this by immediately integrating Aboriginal students into the workforce," he says.

Desjarlais estimates that Cameco has invested close to \$250,000 on his one son alone, and, in turn, his son has invested in Cameco as his employer-of-choice.

"It's a win-win situation; my children receive invaluable support and training, while Cameco receives highly educated employees." Desjarlais's oldest daughter has also received a scholarship from the Northern Enterprise Fund and a summer position for three years as a general laborer performing various duties. The income she earned allowed her to attend the University of Saskatchewan's Registered Nursing (RN) program and she now works as an RN in the community.

In addition to providing educational opportunities, Cameco provides employment after graduation – something that most graduates still have to pursue, often outside of their chosen field.

Desjarlais's other children have also received scholarships; pre-employment training and they have all worked at Cameco through the summer. His youngest is just graduating from high school and is still deciding on which direction to take. Perhaps, she'll be the latest Desjarlais to continue the family affair.



Julia Ewing, Manager, Northern Affairs, Cameco Corporation

“

It's a win-win situation; my children receive invaluable support and training, while Cameco receives highly educated employees.

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The Saskatchewan Uranium Industry

- The uranium mining industry spent more than \$157 million on salaries, wages and benefits for its direct employees. Of this, more than \$57 million was paid to residents of Saskatchewan's north.
- \$2.6 million was donated to community and charitable organizations and another \$176,500 was given as scholarships and other forms of support to contribute to the education of northern Saskatchewan's youth.
- The uranium industry is responsible for approximately 8,100 jobs in the province (approximately 2,700 direct jobs and an additional 5,400 spin-off jobs).

Key Lake Site

- Largest high-grade uranium milling operation in the world.
- The Key Lake and McArthur River operations together employ 650 people.
- Located 570 kilometers north of Saskatoon by air on the southern rim of the uranium-rich Athabasca basin.
- Nearest village by road is Pinehouse, 220 kilometers south of Key Lake.



At Sir John A. Macdonald Collegiate in Toronto, team leader Cathy Chant has paired off grade 9 students to work with Guiding Circles, in the Healthy Active Living Course, part of the Physical Education curriculum.

Last year, in a bold, innovative move, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) opted to pilot the Guiding Circles career development program to more than 50 teachers recruited from within the 557 schools that the board oversees.

It was a decision that, eventually, has the potential to positively change the futures of its many students, especially those in the 10-14-year-old age range.

“The Guiding Circles approach is an effective way of creating real understanding and communication,” says Vera Taylor, consulting manager of the Education Sector Council Partnership Project.

“It builds confidence and transforms the disenchanted into something more productive...in fact, it can be therapeutic,” she adds.

As a workbook-based program, the Guiding Circles series is a career exploration package that combines Aboriginal perspectives with contemporary career pathing strategies.

Ultimately, the purpose of the Guiding Circle program is to foster self-esteem, to restore hope and to create vision and, in doing so, lives can be changed for the better.

“The Toronto District School Board is being used as an innovative lab,” explains Taylor.

“The TDSB examined new models of schooling, with the intent of developing new programming...and the Guiding Circles method supports the development of four of our essential target areas,” she says.

Nine critical targets have been identified by the TDSB as important development goals including:

- Creation of sustainable partnerships.
- Development of nine essential skills (Guiding Circles).
- Expanded opportunities for experiential learning (Guiding Circles).
- New courses and program packages that are sector and skills focused.
- Career awareness for students (Guiding Circles).
- Parental awareness of new realities.
- Use of classroom resources with sector applications, websites and labour market information.
- Skills recognition and industry-recognized certificates and credentials.
- Effective transitions to work or post-secondary training (Guiding Circles).

“Guiding Circles was one of the highest rated initiatives with many teachers noting that it was practical and it was something they could work with right away,” Taylor says.

In fact, feedback from teachers said it was motivational, filled an important need and served to generate excellent discussion.

During the 2006/2007 school year, as some teachers were busy learning about the Guiding Circles method, a team of seven others were writing the curriculum modules so that the initiative could be field-tested, in various settings, during the 2007/2008 school year. The project is also incorporating Guiding Circles strategies into its work with parents as a key foundation for supporting their students in making career choices.

Once delivery is complete, at the end of 2009, the results will be documented by a researcher with the intent of propagating successful modules to other schools across Canada.

“My unit hopes to draw students inward to look at how their personality, combined with their values, can lead them towards more rewarding and successful work and life experiences,” says teacher, Tsahai Daley.

“The unit culminates with students creating life-sized posters of themselves that are made up of their character traits, values and the various connections they have amongst their family, friends and in the community,” Daley adds.

“In the end, students not only begin to understand that their personal style and values are not static and will continue to change and develop as they mature, but they will literally begin to see themselves as their most valuable career education resource.”

The project is co-funded by the Government of Canada, Sector Council Program, the Ontario Ministry of Education Student Success Initiative and the Toronto District School Board.

If your organization or community would like more information about Guiding Circles contact Trina Maher-Bučko, National Manager, Career Development Strategies at tbucko@aboriginalhr.ca or 866.711.5091.

KELLY LENSAY HONOURED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN ○ ○ ○ ○



In a recent ceremony, Kelly Lendsay, President and CEO of the Aboriginal Human Resource Council, received a prestigious award from the University of Saskatchewan.

Kelly was honoured as one of the University's 100 Alumni of Influence in celebration of its centennial year. Kelly had been chosen "as an exceptional graduate whose accomplishments have influenced the growth and development of the university, the province and the world during the last century."

Please join us as we congratulate Kelly on his well-deserved honour.

MASTERING ABORIGINAL INCLUSION ○ ○ ○ ○

The Council thanks the 29 companies of the Networks of Change, who have helped to develop and test the five modules of *Mastering Aboriginal Inclusion*.

The five modules have been completed and fully designed and will be available for sale in early 2008.

Also to come in early 2008: the *Mastering Aboriginal Inclusion* Training Program. Details will be available in Newsletter 13.



A WORKFORCE CONNEX UPDATE... ○ ○ ○ ○

"WALK IN MY MOCCASINS"



Canadian veterans open the *Workforce Connex* event, held in Winnipeg, Manitoba in early October, with an entry march.



At Val d'Or Quebec the crowd enjoyed a few strings on the fiddle with the very talented Cree Grand Chief Mathew Mukash. Credit: Paul Brindamour.



The evening's co-hosts, Edith Cloutier and Florent Vollant, shared entertainment and laughs at Quebec *Workforce Connex*. Credit: Paul Brindamour.

Today, with most Canadian employers facing staffing shortages, many companies are interested in learning how to best access Aboriginal workers eager to fill the need, and what better way to do that than by talking with Aboriginal communities themselves.

By bringing together employers, human resource practitioners and job seekers, *Workforce Connex*, a national forum series hosted in various locations across Canada, has succeeded in pioneering new solutions to Aboriginal employment issues, thanks to the dialogue that takes place during these forums.

The results of this group dialogue have both been innovative and insightful. With nine *Workforce Connex* forums now complete, the most common employer issues identified include:

- Lack of information and knowledge about how Aboriginal employment centres work and who to contact for job postings. (In some cases, employers are not aware that Aboriginal employment centres even exist.)
- Lack of knowledge about the Aboriginal labour market and how to retain Aboriginal employees.
- Lack of communication, planning, partnership and networking between employers and the Aboriginal community.
- Lack of knowledge on how to expose Aboriginal communities and high school youth to apprenticeship and trades employment.
- Lack of information on how to deal with cultural differences and how to curb stereotypes and racism.

On the supply side, Aboriginal communities have been able to express their concerns and perspective as well. Through reverse role play, presentations and group sessions, the most common issues identified were:

- Lack of information and knowledge about job availability, location of jobs, who to contact for job postings and the job skills or qualifications required.
- Lack of communication, planning, partnership and networking between employers and Aboriginal employment centres.
- No consideration of Aboriginal culture in the recruitment process, the policies and procedures of employers or the workplace environment.
- Aboriginal workers may require job-ready skills as they often do not have the proper qualifications (whether its education, experience, certifications, pre-employment training or work ethic).
- A lack of resource people (guidance counsellors, mentors, role models) and positive advice for Aboriginal workers impairs their ability to move forward.
- A lack of funding, fear of the unknown, transportation and relocation issues act as barriers to Aboriginal employment.

While these challenges appear daunting, more than 433 commitments have arisen out of the nine forums. Employer commitments include initiatives that will:

- Follow-up on the contacts made at the forum, meet with communities to discuss job opportunities and demystify the interview process.
- Deliver presentations in schools that target Aboriginal youth.
- Create job shadow opportunities and consider developing an assistance program for trades.
- Post jobs through different avenues to reach Aboriginal workers (such as the council's national Aboriginal job board – *The Inclusion Network* @ www.inclusionnetwork.ca) and attend career fairs.
- Build partnerships with Aboriginal employment centres.

In return, the Aboriginal community have also committed to:

- Spread the word that Aboriginal communities have educated, skilled workers.
- Make contact with a minimum of five businesses.
- Lobby for more funds to increase the literacy rate among Aboriginal workers.
- Share success stories in communities and in the public sphere.
- Encourage youth to stay in school and others to take training so that they can be ready to fill new positions or jobs that become vacant due to retirement.

To date, more than 1,300 people have attended *Workforce Connex* forums including participants from employer companies, Aboriginal employment centres, Aboriginal communities, training institutions and government. Generally, most attendees are HR professionals, career practitioners, diversity leaders, owners, educators, government leaders, program experts, elders and Aboriginal workers.

This year, the forum was presented in Quebec, Manitoba and New Brunswick, while past forums have been held in Alberta, British Columbia, Labrador, Nova Scotia and Ontario. Future forums are also planned for Saskatchewan, Nunavut, Ontario and the Northwest Territories.

Hosted by the AHRC in cooperation with a regional advisory committee comprised of representation from Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement Holders (AHRDAs), a number of private companies, and government, the forum's mandate is to build partnerships and understandings that develop strategies that profit business and Aboriginal workers alike.

The national *Workforce Connex* forum series is sponsored by the sector council program, Human Resources and Social Development Canada and various regional government and corporate sponsors.

New Brunswick...

New Brunswick is experiencing the lowest unemployment rate the province has seen in 30 years. The issue of a skills shortage will continue to increase as the projected growth in several sectors of the economy begins to take shape within the next few years.

Workforce Connex gave employers, the Aboriginal community, training institutions and government the ability to do the preliminary work that is necessary to ensure a skilled workforce is available to meet upcoming demands in the trades and apprenticeship sector.

Aboriginal workers are now being mentored and prepared to help fill 5,000 new jobs expected to be available in the Saint John area within the next five years.

Quebec...

The forum was a landmark event that brought together, for the first time, all Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal labour market stakeholders in Quebec for discussions that has created new relationships based on understanding, respect and knowledge. The outcome of the conversation has helped build Quebec's capacity to meet upcoming labour demand challenges. The forum involved every Aboriginal employment centre in Quebec, sector committees, unions, employers, training institutions and provincial/federal government representatives.

Quebec is experiencing the lowest birthrate in the Western World. While Quebec's economy is stabilized at this time, economists are forecasting an upcoming skills shortage gap caused by an aging workforce and a shift in employment demographics. Quebec *Workforce Connex* will open training and employment opportunities to build and sustain an Aboriginal workforce. Emphasis will be placed on skilled trades in the construction, mining, forestry, tourism and social economy sectors.

Manitoba...

Manitoba's labour supply is expected to begin declining in 2011 due to a decrease in anticipated population growth. The issue will only intensify as projected growth in several sectors of the economy begins to take shape. According to Statistics Canada's 2001 Census, the average median age of the Aboriginal population in Manitoba is 23.5, considerably lower than the average median age of the Canadian population at 38.8. From 1996 to 2001, the Canadian working age population grew by five per cent, while the Aboriginal labour force grew by 25 per cent.

Workforce Connex provided employers, the Aboriginal community, training institutions and government with the ability to start the preliminary work that is necessary to ensure a skilled and local workforce is available to meet upcoming demands in the trades and apprenticeship sector.

In a unique situation, the province is working ahead of shortages to work with the Aboriginal population to stave off an anticipated shortage of skilled workers.

Moving Commitments Forward

A common theme with the commitments advanced in *Workforce Connex* Quebec and Manitoba was the strong realization that continued work is needed in the area of trades and apprenticeship. Specifically, how can the momentum of the *Workforce Connex* events be used to advance the national agenda to increase the number of Aboriginal people in trades occupations? *Workforce Connex* committees have met since the event and developed a preliminary regional trades strategy that will carry forward the partnerships and momentum so successfully struck at these events.

In New Brunswick, a First Nations / Business Liaison Group has been formed and discussion on follow-up is being initiated in an effort to build and strengthen partnerships between Aboriginal employment centres and industry.



Claudette Carboneau, president of the Confédération des syndicats nationaux receives instruction from Inuit throat singer Theresa Tooma at a Workforce Connex gala event.
Credit: Paul Brindamour.

We've heard it said...

“ Fifty per cent of our workforce consists of Aboriginal people. It's successful for us and others are going to have to look to this solution... We need employees and Aboriginal people fill that need – it's important to us, it's important to Aboriginal people, and it's important to our country. ”

– Ted Smook, President
Smook Brothers, Thompson, MB

“ Aboriginal people need to feel comfortable – physically and mentally. They need to be engaged as part of a team, not a quota – they need to be empowered. To be successful, plan for success, not statistics. ”

– John Leroux, accessories cell leader
Standard, Aero, MB

“ Partnerships need to plan the training for employment. ”

– Grand Chief Sydney Garrioch
Manitoba Keewatinook Ininew Okimowin

UPCOMING EVENTS

December 13-14, 2007 - Regina, SK

Guiding Circles 2 Workshop

Facilitator Training for Booklet 2: Finding New Possibilities

December 18-19, 2007 - Abbotsford, BC

Guiding Circles 1 Workshop

Facilitator Training for Booklet 1: Understanding Yourself

April 22-24, 2008 - Montreal, QC

National Aboriginal Human Resource Conference 2008

Advancing Aboriginal Inclusion

Pre-Conference workshops: April 22, 2008

Conference: April 23-24, 2008

June 8-10, 2008 - Victoria, BC

Victoria Conference Centre and the Fairmont Empress Hotel

Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF) 2008 Conference

Apprenticeship - Our Competitive Advantage

June 10-11, 2008 - Victoria, BC

Victoria Conference Centre and the Fairmont Empress Hotel

National Aboriginal Trades Symposium 2008

Building a Skilled and Untapped Apprenticeship Resource

More information on any of these events can be found at the council's website: www.aboriginalhr.ca.

If you have a practice...

Or an initiative, or a smart new way to grow Aboriginal employment, we'd definitely like to hear about it. We are on the lookout for the best and most promising innovations in creating a larger Aboriginal workforce for upcoming issues of *The National Report on Aboriginal Inclusion*. Let us hear. Send a brief description to the editor, bkuhns@aboriginalhr.ca.

THE INCLUSION NETWORK – www.inclusionnetwork.ca Canada's National Aboriginal Job Board

Make Better Connections

- Fast becoming the preferred electronic choice for locating Aboriginal talent in Canada.
- Improved second generation electronic venue that provides more flexibility.
- Hundreds of registered employers and more than 3,000 registered Aboriginal job seekers.
- Advanced technology, expanded reach, plus online and phone-based support
- Free resume postings and job searches.
- Connecting employers and educators directly to the Aboriginal talent pool and over 400 Aboriginal employment centres.
- Bilingual site.

Visit www.inclusionnetwork.ca today!



THE NATIONAL REPORT ON ABORIGINAL INCLUSION

Brought to you by the...

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Canada

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